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## Managing condition of late calvers

By Katrina Roberts, Herd+Plus Veterinarian

**Mature cows need to calve in body condition score (BCS) 5 and first and second calvers in BCS 5.5.** These targets are based on production and reproductive benefits associated with these calving BCS. As cows will not gain BCS in the last month of their gestation, the BCS of late calving cows will not improve prior to calving. Late-calving cows (i.e. cows calving more than 6 weeks after the planned start of calving; PSC), are not only affected by being late-calving, but may also not be at target BCS (i.e. either too fat or too thin). Ensure that the late-calvers are managed accordingly, and if you have a considerable proportion of your herd in this group (>13% of the herd to calve) you may consider preferentially managing this group after calving to minimise the impact on reproductive performance. Current options for the late-calvers may include: once-a-day milking, running in their own mob, joining the young cow/light mob when they calve and/or preferential feeding.



## Take control of your herd's reproductive performance



**We understand that it's not just doing the right things, but doing the right things at the right time that can make the difference to your reproductive results. Thinking about the short and long term outcomes of each decision is crucial to you being in control of your herd's performance.**



Research tells us many things have already happened this season (and last season in fact) that will be strong predictors of your herd's reproductive performance. However there are still plenty of things you can do to optimise your performance in your specific circumstances. Every farmer, farm and herd is different; you need to ensure that focusing on the areas that will give you the biggest impact are where you are putting your resources this season.

We recognise that you are currently very busy with calving and it's hard to think about mating. However, unless you think about and plan for mating now, then critical actions may not happen at the right time.

To ensure you remain in control and the critical actions happen at the right time, book a 30 minute ReproReady consultation with your vet.

This short planning meeting is a service we offer at no charge to our members.

At the end of the meeting you will have a complete outline of all the key dates for your herd's mating programme, and have discussed which actions are the important ones for you.

All you need to do is call your clinic today to book in!



**Book your free Repro Ready Consult**

**and be prepared for mating. We will discuss your options for this year's mating, so you can make informed choices. We only need 30 minutes of your time and it's free.**

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## Metrichecking increases your cheque

### Dirty cows can be a major cause of poor reproductive performance.

Dirty cows have an infection of their uterus termed endometritis. They take 2-3 weeks longer to get in calf and have empty rates 10-30% higher than clean cows.

No herd escapes endometritis and it is vital to minimise the negative effect dirty cows have on your herd. A simple check and treat program will result in better fertility, earlier calving, more days in milk, less empties and more profitable cows.

There will be cows in the herd more likely to develop uterine infection. This group of animals are known as 'At Risk' cows and includes any animal that has had retained foetal membranes (RFM), twins, milk fever, an assisted calving and/or a dead calf.

Metrichecking is a simple and cost-effective method for finding dirty cows and studies have shown better responses to treatment when cows are detected and treated earlier. Cows can be checked in batches from 2 weeks after calving or the whole herd can be metrichecked, ideally at least 35 days before the start of mating.

Metrichecking the whole herd on average detects about 10% of cows as being infected. If transition management has not been up to scratch then up to 20% of cows may be detected as dirty. There is a positive return on investment in herds where there are more than 2% of dirty cows.

As an alternative to whole herd metrichecking, it is possible to form a list of 'At Risk' cows and have only these animals checked (or have them checked earlier). However, be aware you could be missing up to two-thirds of the dirty cows by not examining every cow. This method requires keeping accurate records of problem cows.

There are several options for treating the infected cows. The most common is an intrauterine antibiotic with a nil milk withholding.

Before mating, all cows in your herd should have a clean bill of health. Talk to your Vet about metrichecking and what else can help you get your cows in calf quicker.



## Bull Power – It Comes Down To Simple Maths

A shorter mating period is the new normal. This means getting 'the bull bit' right becomes even more important.

To some extent, it comes down to simple maths: if the same numbers of cows are required to get in calf over a shorter period of time, you will need more bull power and better bull management. This means both quantity and quality.

Our bull fertility testing service has continued to grow and can give you greater confidence in the quality of your animals. More than 10% of the bulls we tested last year had low fertility scores and several farms had high failure rates. Just one dominant 'dud' bull amongst many can hold back conception rates and more than one in a small team can be disastrous.

We can also help you structure your bull teams according to individual test results, and give tailored advice on bull:cow ratios and bull management according to your farm and farm system.

If you would like more information, please contact our Morrinsville office 07 889 5159 and ask to speak with one of our Bull Fertility Team vets.



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Metrichecking whole herd for only \$1 +GST per cow. Members only. Applies to more than one visit. Visit fee and mileage additional.

Not redeemable for cash. Conditions may apply. Expires 1/12/2016.

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## Mastitis Help & Advice

We have a specialised mastitis team who have undergone extra training in mastitis and milk quality management. There is no need to put up with high somatic cell counts or a high prevalence of mastitis. Our mastitis team can assess your individual situation and work with you to make a practical plan to achieve the goals that you want.

Calving can be a challenging time for dealing with mastitis in your herd. If you are grading we are accredited by Fonterra so can access demerit relief to help pay for the cost involved with solving a milk quality problem. We can attend an afternoon milking with extra support staff to help identify cows causing the grades and get you back to grade-free supply. The accredited vet can then work with you to help prevent future issues.

Give your vet a call if you want to discuss this further



## 9 ways to prevent human infection of Lepto

Controlling leptospirosis by vaccination has historically been the primary way of preventing lepto in humans.

However vaccination only minimises the risk and there are other things which increase the risk of you contracting human lepto that we need to be sure you are aware of. Rising rates of human infection have made it clear that further steps are needed to reduce the risk of people becoming infected. Basic hygiene and care when handling animals are essential, and reducing cattle contact with potential sources of infection is also helpful. Most importantly, every person on farm needs to be regularly educated about the severity of leptospirosis, and how to reduce their own risk of infection.

1. Vaccination of animals reduces the risk to humans, but does not eliminate it.
2. Basic hygiene must always be practiced.
3. Avoid contact with urine, such as splashes in the shed.
4. Cover cuts with waterproof plasters.
5. Wash hands with disinfectant.
6. Avoid contact between hands and eyes/mouth during milkings.
7. No smoking, eating or drinking in the shed.
8. Wear gloves and aprons during risky procedures, such as milking, calvings or RFMs.
9. Be especially careful around aborting cows and aborted material.

## Calf Vaccinations

To reduce the risk of Leptospirosis becoming a problem on your farm, vaccination from 4 weeks of age is recommended, with a second shot 4 weeks later. Depending on when you do your annual herd Lepto, you may need to give the calves a third shot to bring them in line with the herd.

Calves should be vaccinated against blackleg from one month of age. They will need two injections four weeks apart.



# Rear Great Calves to Make a Great Start

Calves need to grow well to perform to their full genetic potential as part of your herd. For dairy cows, the reproduction journey starts from birth, so effective calf rearing and weaning with a focus on liveweight targets is vital for their future development.

Heifers that fail to reach liveweight BV based on liveweight targets at mating are more likely to calve slower as first calvers, produce less milk and take longer to get back in-calf. We can help you with your calf management. Here are six tips to get you started:

- ✓ **Build calf immunity with colostrum** and fight off early infectious challenges. Calves need 2 litres of fresh, first milking colostrum within the first 6-12 hours of birth, with the first 6 hours being the most crucial time period for maximum absorption. Ideally, 2 x 2 litre feeds within the first 12 hours is recommended. Calves which do not receive adequate immune transfer from colostrum have been shown to take longer to reach target liveweight for first service.
- ✓ **Reduce the stress on your newborns.** Provide warm, dry, well-ventilated housing.
- ✓ **Top quality staff can do a top job with the right gear.** Employ experienced calf rearers and equip them with good gear to get the job done. Ensure they are comfortable tube-feeding calves. If you or your staff need training on how to use a calf stomach tube, we are happy to help.
- ✓ **Supply adequate quantities of good quality feed.** Pre-weaning nutrition to reach growth rate targets requires adequate supplies of quality feed.
- ✓ **Wean on liveweight.** Heifers that reach target liveweights are more likely to calve early, produce more milk and get back in-calf quicker. Targets on MINDA Weights (at [www.MINDA.co.nz](http://www.MINDA.co.nz)) are based on the animal's own individual liveweight BV.
- ✓ **Monitor liveweights through the first 2 years of life.** Heifers which calve down at 90% of their expected mature liveweight should calve quickly, produce more and get back in-calf quicker than those that fail to reach target.

For further information about raising quality calves check out our series of information sheets.

**Prudent Antibiotic Use For Calf Scours**  
Antibiotics should only be used for calves that are depressed, are not eating and have a temperature. The leading cause of calf scours in New Zealand is viral. This means that antibiotics will not treat the cause of the scours.

**Treatment of Scouring Calves**  
Scours: prevention is much easier than cure. Studies show that 40-50% of calves do not receive enough colostrum within the first 12 hours of life. This makes them prone to diseases and affects their subsequent growth and production. Colostrum acquired colitis also has a higher death rate than calves that receive good colostrum. The timing of the first colostrum feed is critical. The first 6 hours is the most crucial time period for maximum absorption. Ideally, 2 x 2 litre feeds within the first 12 hours is recommended. Calves which do not receive adequate immune transfer from colostrum have been shown to take longer to reach target liveweight for first service.

**Colostrum management**  
Colostrum management is the key to preventing disease and death in calves. The cow and calf are 'oddities of nature'. Unlike in other mammalian species, where antibodies can pass freely from the mother across the placenta to foetus, immunity to her baby calves are born with little or no immunity to disease. This is because unlike in humans and other mammals, the cow's placenta prevents the transfer of antibody molecules, essential for immunity, from crossing the placental blood barrier. Therefore, calves must drink colostrum, and absorb antibodies from colostrum, across their gut wall to obtain immunity until their own immune system becomes functional. This process is often referred to as 'passive transfer'. Calves that fail to absorb sufficient quantities of antibodies are said to have suffered from Failure of Passive Transfer (FPT).

**Calves can develop FPT in a number of ways, all related to poor colostrum management.**  
Other to we reach the peak of the body calving season, colostrum management becomes more high-stakes as people become busier.

**The 3 Qs of colostrum management to prevent FPT:**  
1. **QUICK** - we need to get colostrum into newborn calves quickly to prevent FPT. Specifically within the first 6-12 hours of life before the newborn calf gut closes.  
2. **QUANTITY** - we need to feed enough colostrum to the newborn calf to prevent FPT. Specifically 10-15% of the calf's liveweight as a minimum. NB: Because the newborn first stomach capacity is only 1.5 to 2 litres we need to split feeds into no more than 2 litres.  
3. **QUALITY** - the 3rd Q is quality. Colostrum quality is measured by antibody levels (we want these to be high) and bacteria levels (we want these to be low).

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## Ready For Mating Workshop 31 AUGUST

Want to know more?

REGISTER YOUR INTEREST WITH YOUR VET NOW or [anexafvc.co.nz/events](http://anexafvc.co.nz/events)

## Spring Hours

NGATEA

Starting Saturday 2nd July  
10 am – 12 pm

GORDONTON

Starting Saturday 16th July  
10 am – 1 pm

Please note no vet is at the clinic For Veterinary Assistance please phone after hours on 0800 2 THE VET



## Book your calf disbudding!

Contact your local clinic or visit [www.anexafvc.co.nz/disbudding](http://www.anexafvc.co.nz/disbudding)



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